

Message Text

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LIMDIS FOR ASST SECY HOLBROOKE AND GLEYSTEN ONLY

FOL TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO BANGKOK JAKARTA
MANILA SINGAPORE TOKYO FROM KUALA LUMPUR DTD 20 MAY 1978 QTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 4391

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEAN, ID, SN, TH, RP, MY, US

SUBJ: ASEAN-US MINISTERIAL MEETING

REF: A) STATE 124848, B) MANILA 08252

1. I TOOK ADVANTAGE OF A PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED CALL
ON FOREIGN MINISTER RITHAUDDEEN THIS MORNING (MAY 19)
TO BRING UP THE SUBJECT OF THE FORTHCOMING ASEAN-US
MINISTERIAL MEETING. RITHAUDDEEN STATED THAT HE
HOPED, AS DID HIS OTHER ASEAN COLLEAGUES, THAT THE
FORTHCOMING US-ASEAN DIALOGUE WOULD HAVE MORE POSITIVE
RESULTS THAN THE MANILA MEETING LAST YEAR. HE SAID
THAT WHILE REALIZING THAT LAST YEAR'S MEETING WAS
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EXPLORATORY, ASEAN HOPED THAT SOMETHING MORE WOULD
COME OF THE NEXT ROUND PARTICULARLY IN THE ECONOMIC
AND TRADE AREAS. HE SAID THIS DID NOT NECESSARILY
IMPLY SOMETHING ELABORATE BUT RATHER WHAT EACH SIDE
CAN GIVE PARTICULARLS ON ISSUES RELATED TO MEETING
THE CURRENT WORLD EOCNOMIC CRISIS, E.G., SOMETHING
ON THE SUBJECT OF THE COMMON FUND TO WHICH HIS

GOVERNMENT ATTACHES SPECIAL IMPORTANCE. IN THIS REGARD THE FORTHCOMING AUSTRALIAN POSITION AT THE RECENT ASIAN REGION COMMONWEALTH SUMMIT IN SYDNEY, HAD BEEN MOST WELCOME. THE U.S., LIKE AUSTRALIA, AND THE ASEAN COUNTRIES, IS ALSO A RAW-MATERIALS PRODUCING COUNTRY AND A FORTHCOMING POSITION ON THE COMMON FUND WOULD HELP THE US-ASEAN DIALOGUE. RITHAUDDEEN SUGGESTED IT MIGHT BE HELPFUL IF THE U.S. COULD SOMEHOW LOOK INTO ASSISTING THE ASEAN INDUSTRIAL PORJECTS; FOR INSTANCE, VIA LOANS.

2. ON THE SUBJECT OF DATES FOR THE MEETING, RITHAUDDEEN SAID THAT HE HAD ENCOUNTERED INDONESIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MOCHTAR AND THAI FOREIGN MINISTER UPPADIT AT THE AIRPORT IN BANGKOK RECENTLY WHERE THEY HAD INFORMALLY DISCUSSED THE SUBJECT OF TIMING AND VENUE. THEY AGREED AMONG THEMSELVES THAT THERE ARE THREE ALTERNATIVES: 1) TO HOLD THE MEETING IN ONE OF THE ASEAN CAPITALS, 2) TO HAVE PHILIPPINE FOREIGN MINISTER ROMULO LEAD A DELEGATION OF SENIOR ASEAN TO WASHINGTON OR, 3) FOR FIVE MINISTERS TO GOT TO WASHINGTON AT THE TIME OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, I.E., SEPTEMBER. HE WENT ON TO NOTE THAT FOR MALAYSIA THE TIMING OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS COMPLICATES CHOICES OF THE MOST SUTIALE DATE FOR THEM.
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3. I REPLIED THAT THESE ALTERNATIVES THAT HE MENTIONED PROVIDED A NEW ELEMENT IN OUR DISCUSSIONS. DRAWING ON REFTEL A, I OUTLINED OUR POSITION WITH REGARD TO THE AUGUST 3 AND 4 DATES, NOTING THIS PERIOD WOULD PROVIDE OPTIMUM AVAILABILITY F SENTIOR USG OFFICIALS AS WELL AS MAXIMIZING EXPOSURE TO CONGRESS AND MEDIA. I NOTED THAT WE ARE SEEKING AS HIGH-LEVEL US PARTICIPATION AS POSSIBLE, THAT WE HAVE CONFIRMED THE AVAILABILITY OF SECRETARY VANCE FOR THOSE DATES AND SECRETARY BLUMENTHAL HOPEFULLY WILL BE ABLE TO ATTEND, ESPECIALLY IF ASEAN ECONOMIC MINISTERS ARE ON HAND. I SAID THAT THE PROBLEM WITH THE SEPTEMBER UNGA PERIOD IS THAT THE PREISENT AND THE SECRETARY WILL BE INVOLVED WITH MANY TOP LEVEL MEETINGS, THEREFORE, 1) DIMINSHING THE ATTENTION THE ADMINISTRAION CAN GIVE TO MEETINGS, 2) REDUCING PUBLICITY, AND 3) RAISING THE PROBLEM OF AVAILABILITY OF CONGRESSMEN WHO MAY BE INVOLVED IN RE-ELECTION CAMPAINGS. I NOTED THAT WE HOPED TO RECEIVE CONFIRMATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE ON THE DATES AND NATURE OF AT-

TENDANCE THE ASEAN COUNTRIES DESIRE, IN ORDER TO FACILITATE OUR PLANNING.

4. RITHAUDDEEN IN REPSONSE SAID THAT THESE ELEMENTS I DESCRIBED HAD NOT BEEN BROUGHT UP IN BANGKOK, I.E., THAT HE, , MOKHTAR AND UPPADIT WHILE "THINKING ALOUD" HAD NO CONSIDERED THE QUESTION OF THE AVAILABILITY FO THE PRESIDENT OR CONGRESSMEN. HE ALSO INDICATED THAT HE WAS UNAWARE THE AUG. 3

AND 4 DATES WERE ACCEPTABEL TO US, AND REMARKED THAT HE BELIEVEED THOSE DATES WOULD NOT CONIFLICT WITH ELECTIONS(DATE OF WHICH, WHILE WIDELY RUMORED TO BE SOON, REMAINS UNSPECIFIED). HE INDICATED CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT IN THIS CASE HE WOULD BE ABLE TO ATTEND. I REPLIED THAT WE ARE AWARE OF ASEAN'S DESIRE FOR SUBSTANCE IN THE NEXT MEETING. WITH REGARD TO THIS I NOTED THAT WORKING LEVEL US-IAD OFFICIALS ARE SCHEDULED TO MEET AT THE END OF THE MONTH IN MANILA WITH ASEAN OFFICIALS TO LOOK INTO POSSIBLE AREAS FOR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. I ADDED THAT WE ARE ALSO STILL AWAITING ASEAN'S REACTION TO OUR WRITTEN REPLIES TO THEIR MEMOS ON VARIOUS AREAS OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION.

5. RITHAUDDEEN PROMISED TO RAISE THESE ISSUES AT ENXT MONTH'S ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING. HE ASIAD THAT PERHAPS IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE FOR THE ASEAN ECONOMIC MINISTERS TO HOLD, IN EFFECT, A PREPARATORY CONFERENCE PRIOR TO THE US-ASEAN MEETING. I INTERJECTED THE POSSIBILIITY OF ONE OR MORE OF THE MALAYSIAN ECONOMIC MINISTERS PERHAPS DPM MAHTHIR, BEING ON HAND FOR THE WASHINGTON DIALOGUE PARTICULARLY SINCE THE PRINCIPLE FOCUS OF THE MEETING WOULD BE ECONOMIC. I RECALLED THAT BOTH THE TRADE AND INDUSTRIES MINISTER HAMZAH AND PRIMARY INDUSTRIES MINISTER MUSA HITAM HAD BEEN PRESENT IN MANILA, FOR THE LAST ASEAN-US MEETING. RITHAUDDEEN REPLIED THAT THE ASEAN LEADERSHIP WAS NOT THAT FAR ALONG ON THE SUBJECT OF COMPOSTION OF DELEGATIONS. FROM THE MALAYSIAN PERSPECTIVE PERHAPS A SENIOR ECONOMIC OFFICIAL OR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES MINISTER TAIB MAHMUD COULD BE ON HAND.

6. COMMENT: THE CLEAR IMPLICATIONS OF RITHAUDDEEN'S REMARKS WERE A) THAT HE HAS NOT BEEN FOLLOWING ASEAN DEVELOPMENTS VERY CLOSELY LATELY, AND B) THAT IF CONFIDENTIAL

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THE ASEAN-US MEETING IS HELD AT THE MINISTERIAL
LEVEL HE AND AT LEAST SOME OF HIS ASEAN COLLEAGUES
WOULD PREFER THE ASEAN DELEGATIONS TO BE HEADED
BY REPRESENTATIVE MEMBERS FOREIGN MINISTERS. I AM
ALSO AFRAID THAT THE GOM'S PLANS, LET ALONE ASEAN'S
AS A WHOLE, ARE UNLIVELY TO PUT IT MILDLY* SENIOR
GOM OFFICIALS OF COURSE ARE INCREASINGLY FOCUSSED
ON ELECTIONS, WHICH THEY ALL ASSUME WILL BE SOON.
MILLER UNQUOTE VANCE

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